

THE CYLINDER SEAL FROM PASARGADAE: OF WINGS AND WHEELS, DATE AND FATE

BY

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The lone cylinder seal excavated by David Stronach at Pasargadae (Figs. 1-3) poses several interesting questions of date, iconography, and artifactual fate¹. In this encomium to a dear friend and colleague I offer information and perspectives gleaned from my own ongoing work with Mark Garrison on glyptic evidence excavated some 40 km south of Pasargadae, at Persepolis, in order to provide contextualization for this important seal. I do not aim here for a comprehensive survey of all possibly relevant comparanda, much less a definitive iconological analysis of the seal's imagery. Rather, I aim primarily to "mainstream" the Pasargadae seal, to *begin* to weave it into the fabric of evidence on art and society derived from seal impressions on the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury tablets (dating 509-494 B.C.E. and 492-458 B.C.E. respectively)². Only on a selective basis will I also

¹ Illustrated initially in Professor Stronach's preliminary excavation report in *Iran* 1963, pl. VIa, the publication of record is now Stronach 1978, 178-179 and pl. 162 a-b. Subsequent publications include: Moorey 1978, 148 and Fig. 6; Collon 1987, 90-91 (no. 425); Kaim 1991, 31-34 (esp. 32), with discussion of the iconography of the winged figure, but no illustration; Briant 1996, 237 (fig. 21a).

² The seals impressed on Fortification tablets 1-2087 (those whose texts were published by Richard Hallock in 1969) are being catalogued in three fascicules. See Garrison and Root in press and forthcoming; Garrison and Root 1996; Root 1997 on the archive, all with extensive bibliography. In this article references to seals used on the Fortification tablets address only those within our research permit (those on Elamite tablets 1-2087). For the seal impressions on the much smaller corpus of Treasury tablets, see Schmidt 1957 and discussions in Garrison 1988, Garrison and Root 1996, and Garrison and Root in press, Introduction. Correlations between seals used on the Fortification tablets (PFS #) and specific Fortification tablets (PF #) must be made via the Provisional Concordance in Garrison and Root 1996, since many of Hallock's original seal designations have been refined. Permission to study the tablets comes from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Funding for the project has been supplied by the following and is gratefully acknowledged: The National Endowment for the Humanities, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Iranian-American Medical Association, Vassar College, the University of Michigan, and Trinity University.

refer to information from other archival contexts and to published seal comparanda.

Through a contextualization of its style and iconography I shall suggest a probable date for the manufacture of the Pasargadae seal. In so doing I shall introduce archival material that will surely raise new questions even while enriching the cultural backdrop against which we will henceforth be able to consider the seal from Pasargadae. I shall also make some tentative suggestions about possible avenues for further inquiry into the meaning of its imagery. Finally, I shall address the problem of the artifactual history of this intriguing seal.

The underlying aspect of this endeavor will be the laying out of a set of methodological demonstrations which implicitly problematize issues of increasing investigative significance now that the study of ancient Near Eastern glyptic has attained a true sense of intellectual maturity and (with that) a self-conscious sense of the urgency of expanding the parameters of its relevance. Specifically at issue are the following overlapping concerns:

1. Assumptions embedded in conventional periodizations and strategies of chronological classification;
2. Methodological limitations we face in studying the social history of a seal when we know it as an isolated seal artifact versus the limitations we face when we know it only through ancient impressions;
3. Methodological limitations of what we can do without evidence derived from first-hand study of the focal seal artifact and without specific types of information on seal artifact comparanda which are not universally supplied in published reports of seals in collection catalogues.

The evidence I derive from the seals used on the Persepolis Fortification tablets was not available to David Stronach when he published his exemplary excavation volume on Pasargadae. This article is meant in some small way to reciprocate the gift of knowledge and open-ended questioning that David Stronach has provided through *all* his excavations in Iran — but especially, in this case, through his work at the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Persian empire. Pasargadae, founded around 546 B.C.E., had a significant (if not well-understood) life after the founding of Persepolis by Darius I as the *new* dynastic capital of the Achaemenids in the Persian heartland. The Fortification tablets establish the fact that Pasargadae was part of the administrative purview of the Persepolis regional system of commodity disbursement as we can glimpse it between

509 and 494³. Pasargadae remained a fixture in the Parsa landscape even though many of its originally conceived imperial functions were shifted to Persepolis⁴. Contextualization of the lone Pasargadae seal within the larger creative milieu of Parsa during the early Achaemenid period thus enables us to view this artifact against the lively cultural backdrop so evident from the Fortification tablets⁵.

Description of the Seal

The Pasargadae seal is a straight-sided cylinder measuring 2.60 cm in height and with a diameter of ca. 1.35 cm. It is carved of a “dark brown stone with light inclusions” and it is unperforated⁶.

The image, here described from the viewer’s vantage point with reference to the modern impression, displays a scene of heroic combat encounter. A crowned hero wearing Persian court robe stands facing left. He holds a lion by its rear hind leg. The lion’s forward hind leg extends toward the hero; its forelegs, spread apart, extend downward, terminating just slightly higher in the design field than the feet of the hero. The lion’s neck arches away from the hero but its head, mouth open, turns back

³ Pasargadae is in the area of the Persepolis disbursement purview characterized by Hallock as Area I—his Persepolis region: Hallock 1977, 129-130. For Fortification tablets referring to Pasargadae (as Batrakatash) see Hallock 1969, PF tablets 44, 62, 774, 908, 1134, 1942. Note also references to the Beziyamatiyan, apparently referring to a man from Pasargadae (if Beziyamatiya = Old Persian Paisiyawada): Delaunay 1976, 29, n. 67d. See also Hallock 1978, where thirty-three additional Fortification texts are published — including some relating to Area I.

⁴ Stronach 1978, *passim*, for the archaeological information and 280-282 for the ancient testimonia. On the Persepolis Fortification tablets, Stronach makes the important point that several texts allude to religious, treasury, and construction activity at Pasargadae in the mid-Darius period.

⁵ E.g., Root 1997, for suggestions about the cultural pluralism evident via the Fortification tablet texts and seal impressions — with specific reference also to the individual from Beziyamatiya (=Pasargadae?) mentioned in n. 3 above.

⁶ Stronach 1978, 178. I have not examined the seal first-hand. The height measurement is that given by Stronach. The actual diameter of the seal was computed by (1) establishing the precise degree of enlargement of the published modern seal impression via the stated *height* of the actual artifact; and then by (2) computing the diameter arithmetically after establishing the actual length of one complete rolling of the seal (i.e., the circumference of the cylinder). Similarly, the characterization of the fabric is that given in the excavation report. The drawing by Laura Mosman (our Fig. 1) was made from the published photograph of the modern seal impression.

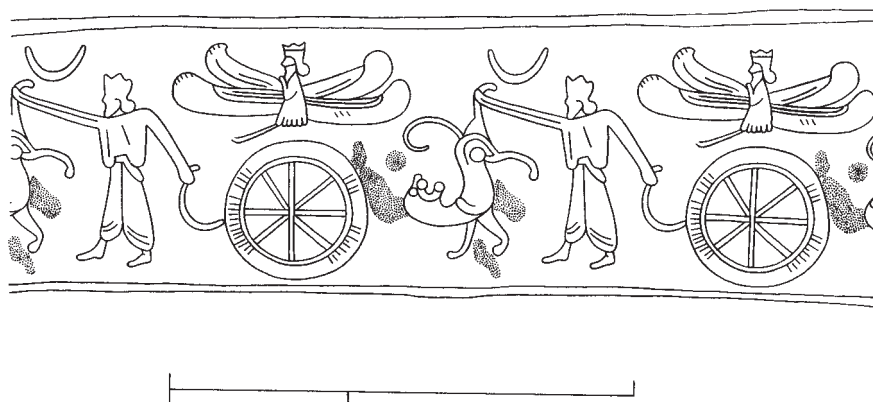


Fig. 1. Drawing from the published photograph of the cylinder seal from Pasargadae.
By Laura Mosman. Actual length of complete seal image: ca. 1.35 cm.
(The scale indicates 1 cm.)

toward the hero. A long tail makes a high curve parallel to the arc of the lion's neck. The hero stands in a vigorous posture, his body seeming to lean slightly toward the lion which he grasps with a rigid right arm. His left arm extends behind his back, grasping a scimitar in a well-articulated hand. The hero appears to wear a short pointed beard resting along his right shoulder. He has an oval-shaped coiffure. His crown appears to show three broad-based triangular dentations. The voluminous sleeves of the court robe are pushed up to reveal bare arms. The lower portion of the robe displays one vertical pleat off-center toward the hero's forward leg, with radial folds depending from it on each side. The hemline is deeply scalloped. The hero's left arm appears smoothly muscular; his right arm is rendered by two parallel grooves that enhance its rigid look. The lion displays drill-work in the rendering of interior muscles, three of its paws, and its face.

Above the heroic scene, lined up vertically with the extended lower hind leg of the lion, is a crescent symbol.

In the terminal field, occupying almost the full height of the available design surface between upper and lower line borders, a four-winged, bird-tailed figure hovers over a large eight-spoked wheel. The winged device, measured from lower wing tip to lower wing tip, extends across 51.6% of the seal surface. (Thus although we describe this zone as the terminal field following established convention, the term should not suggest here a lower



Fig. 2. Photograph of the modern impression of the cylinder seal from Pasargadae. Courtesy of Oxford University Press.

level of symbolic importance or of visual dominance⁷.) The winged figure wears the same type of three-pointed crown as the hero. Its coiffure and beard are also similar. Facing left, its torso is in profile, with only its left arm visible. This arm is bent and raised so that it emerges slightly above the upper wing.

Each wing is composed of a two-grooved rib, pendant to which are carved elegantly upward-curving feathers. The two lower wings are horizontal and longer than the upper. The upper wings extend upward at a slight diagonal. Only one tendril is clearly visible in the impression, extending at a diagonal from the bottom front edge of the feathered tail of

⁷ Work on the patterns of seal application in the Fortification corpus demonstrates the variability in ways in which seal users deployed images on their cylinder seals. Root and Garrison in press; Introduction and specific catalogue entries; Root 1996. These data will eventually prove useful for a project I hope someone may undertake to survey the entire *notion* of “terminal field” imagery in Achaemenid glyptic and in the earlier traditions of Neo-Elamite and Assyro-Babylonian glyptic to which Achaemenid Persian iconography is so meaningfully indebted.



Fig. 3. Photograph of one view of the actual cylinder seal from Pasargadae. Actual height of the seal: 1.60 cm. Courtesy of Oxford University Press.

the figure. It seems from the published photograph, however, that a faint trace of the other tendril exists on the stone although it is not picked up in the impression.

The vertical axis of the eight-spoked wheel is aligned precisely with the shoulder of the winged figure above. The spokes intersect without a hub. The rim of the wheel is wide and articulated by fine radiating lines, only some of which have been rendered in our drawing. A passage extending along the right edge of the wheel and meeting up with the lion's head is difficult to interpret. Here and also between the forelegs of the inverted lion and near its belly we may be seeing vestigial masses relating to a recutting of the seal.

Date and Place of Manufacture: Issues of Style, Material, and Iconography

Discovered unstratified on the Pasargadae Takht (the fortified citadel of the site), any attempt at close dating of the seal must depend totally on procedures of comparative analysis. This analysis should be combined with carefully deployed, logically deduced, postulations that are, nevertheless, as free as possible of unwarranted assumptions. We have already observed that although its functions changed, Pasargadae did not cease to be a locus of activity following the foundation of Persepolis by Darius I shortly before about 515 B.C.E. To this we should add that the seal's recovery from a city known to have been founded by Cyrus the Great around 546 does not mean that the artifact *must* date to that year or later. The mere fact of the seal's discovery at Pasargadae does not, in and of

itself, predetermine its likely date within the Achaemenid period. On one level this is an archaeological truism. On another level, however, it is an important point explicitly to reassert. Evidence such as that provided by the Fortification tablets is complicating in crucial ways our attunement to the importance of the availability and retooling of antique artifacts and modes of presentation within the creative environments of Achaemenid civilization⁸. *In theory* (divorced from any typological observations), a cylinder seal found as an unstratified remnant in an Achaemenid Persian royal city could have a manufacture date anywhere from very early pre-Achaemenid times down deep into the Hellenistic era⁹. That having been said as an important matter of principle, we can move on to another level of analysis.

In actuality, the manufacture of the Pasargadae seal is hardly likely to post-date the Achaemenid empire. There are examples of the perpetuation of the manufacture of cylinder seals into the Hellenistic period; but they are rare¹⁰. Evidence of seals used on the Fortification tablets highlights the fact that new seals carved in antique modes could be accomplished with extraordinary *panache* during the Achaemenid period. PFS 16* (Fig. 4) is an excellent example because contextualization provided by the archive indicates that this seal, with its dramatically Assyrianizing strategies, was commissioned by Parnaka (an extremely powerful personage and member of the royal family) to replace his earlier seal (PFS 9*: Fig. 10) in 500 B.C.E.; but there are many other examples that will become clear through the catalogue of the corpus¹¹. By extension, there is no reason, in the abstract, to reject out of hand the notion that the Pasargadae seal could similarly be a *late* (post-Achaemenid) creation *in the manner of* an Achaemenid artifact. Nevertheless, the weight of probability in the absence of some specific

⁸ Root 1979 for aspects of this issue primarily with a focus on monumental traditions; Garrison and Root in press, Introduction; Root in press.

⁹ Schmidt 1957 for the contents of the Persepolis Treasury, with its indications of lavish stores of antiquities; Harper et al 1992, 159-182, for antique treasures from Susa; Root 1994, *passim*, for a wide-ranging discussion of mechanisms of artistic transmission across period boundaries. At the other end of the spectrum, indications of post-Achaemenid activity are plentiful even at Persepolis — the destruction of which was legendary. See Schmidt 1953 and 1957 in particular.

¹⁰ Porada 1965, 181. Root 1996 for a discussion of some aspects of this issue.

¹¹ Hallock 1977, 128; Garrison 1991; 9; Garrison and Root in press, Introduction, PFS 16*, PFS 9*, and many other relevant entries (e.g., PFS 38). PFS 9*, which is also an archaizing seal rather than an actual antique, will be discussed further below.

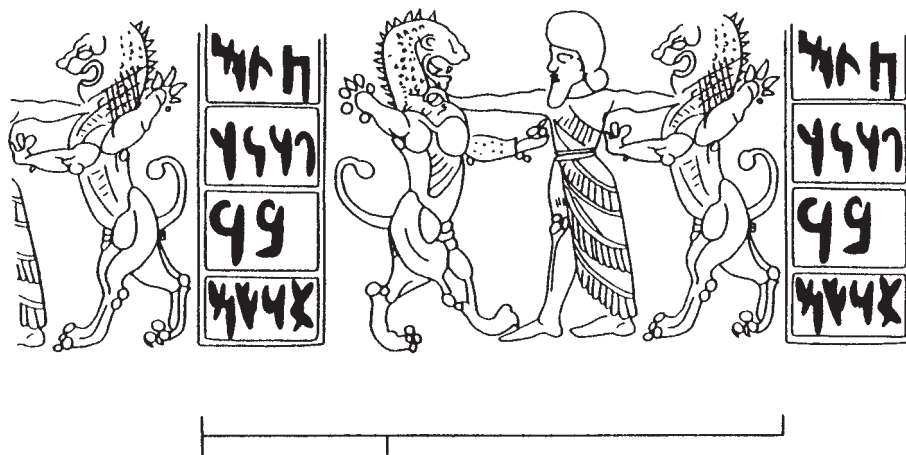


Fig. 4. Composite drawing of PFS 16*, the archaizing Modeled Style seal belonging to Parnaka, uncle of Darius the Great, acquired by 500 B.C.E. (The scale indicates 1 cm.)

indication to the contrary, securely places the Pasargadae seal before the end of the Achaemenid period.

In actuality, again, the manufacture of the Pasargadae seal is no more likely to *predate* the Achaemenid empire than it is to *post-date* it. The hero's pleated robe with voluminous sleeves and his dentate crown seem to be incontrovertible hallmarks of Achaemenid Persian iconography and formal resolution. Analyses by Garrison have demonstrated that at a certain phase, selected glyptic workshops were actively experimenting with various formulae for the rendering of the distinctive Persian robe¹². The data for this analysis are impressions of seals used on the Fortification tablets. These sealed tablets enable us to say that between 509 and 494 B.C.E. we can document *the use* of seals that reveal a system of experimentalism that must have been ongoing somewhat *before* the usage dates of the seals gleaned from this particular archive. Precisely *when* that experimentation *began* and *where* it began (perhaps even in more than one region of the empire simultaneously?) remain open questions.

¹² Garrison 1991, 15-18, for a summary of discussions taken up in greater detail in Garrison 1988. It will be important for the purposes of my discussion here to underscore that Garrison is not postulating a chronological *sequence* in his presentation of stylistic categories seen from the Persepolis archive.

We should start from “square one.” There is no totally secure indication from the Fortification tablets or from any other excavated evidence as far as I am aware that offers a compelling indication this very particular experimentation began before the reign of Cyrus II (during the period of Median domination)¹³.

When we move into the earliest phase of the empire (into the reign of Cyrus II and the eventual founding by him of Pasargadae), does the situation become clearer? Do we have any evidence to suggest that the experimentation in seal studios began back in the reign of Cyrus II, perhaps originally centered in the Pasargadae micro-region? If so, did this experimentation in seal art inspire, follow, or run in tandem with achievements in the context of monumental sculpture? The difficulties here are a little disheartening.

The mere fact that the documentation we have for this lively milieu of glyptic experimentation emerges from Persepolis in the reign of Darius, with no similar evidence from nearby Pasargadae in the reign of Cyrus II or Cambyses, may simply reflect the luck of the archaeological draw. Although excavations did not retrieve an archive of sealed tablets at Pasargadae, this of course does not mean that none existed. Based on analogy with the Fortification archive, I would expect an archive from Pasargadae dating to the years of great building activity in the late Cyrus II period to exhibit a dynamic mix of seals reflecting perpetuation of antiques, new seals in archaizing modes, seals in some foreign styles, *and* seals displaying initiatives in new stylistic and iconographical directions. One great gap that still remains in our knowledge of the artistic environment at Pasargadae shortly before Cyrus’ death in 529 rests in our inability to document specifically what these new directions in glyptic production may have been. To this we must, alas, add significant lack of scholarly unanimity on

¹³ None of the demonstrably pre-Cyrus II antique seals used on the Fortification tablets is very helpful here. PFS 93* (see below), for instance, displays equestrian and martial imagery; the human figures in the scene are not wearing court attire. PFS 77* (Garrison and Root forthcoming, Fascicule II) is (almost certainly) an Elamite heirloom displaying three females wearing long belted gowns. These garments do not show sleeves. The lower garment of the seated figure bears hints of radial folds and a central vertical pleat. But at this point I would like to keep PFS 77* slightly to one side. The rendering of folds is not perhaps close enough to what we eventually see in the Achaemenid context to qualify as a prototype formula — an experimental phase, if you will. Furthermore, the manufacture date of PFS 77* cannot be established with the kind of certainty that the date of PFS 93* can, with its named historical personage.

the total scope of Cyrus' initiatives in the realm of monumental sculpture at this site (see below on Palace P).

It is well known by now that some of the seals used on the Fortification tablets were genuine antiques when they were applied to these documents. The most famous is PFS 93*, inscribed with the name of the *pre*-empire member of the Achaemenid line, Cyrus of Anshan, son of Teispes)¹⁴. This seal emerges emphatically out of Neo-Elamite traditions. Its extraordinary quality and elite status, combined with its appearance as an important office seal in use in the administrative context of Persepolis more than a century after it was manufactured, make it a crucial piece of evidence on the courtly art of the Achaemenid line before Cyrus¹⁵. We are justified in supposing, for the sake of discussion, that PFS 93* may have been used as an office seal already in the time of Cyrus/Cambyses and continued in use for the same administrative purposes down through the time we meet it in the reign of Darius I¹⁶. Taking that as a working hypothesis, we can suggest that we may be witnessing through PFS 93* one seal out of many which must have been around in the social-administrative arena of the Pasargadae context during its brief pre-Persepolis floruit.

Unfortunately, there is, however, no antique seal known so far from the Fortification archive (or any other context) that can be *proven* in that way to have been *manufactured* specifically at the beginning of the empire period, in the reign of Cyrus II or Cambyses. An important and influential discussion by Richard Zettler of seal impressions on early Achaemenid Babylonian tablets has made the point that seals used on a small collection of published documents written during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses perpetuate Neo-Babylonian style and imagery¹⁷. His sample does not demonstrate a shift to other types until the reign of Darius I. The data available in Zettler's analysis are very culture-specific, very entrenched in

¹⁴ Hallock 1977; Garrison 1991, 3-7; Garrison and Root 1996, 6-7, with many references to the now extensive bibliography on this seal; Garrison and Root, forthcoming Fascicule II.

¹⁵ Root 1994, *passim*, and 19-22 with figs. 6-8, on issues of the probable importance of this glyptic tradition attested through PFS 93* to later Achaemenid art developments which are conventionally assumed to be due totally to infusions from Greek aesthetic experience.

¹⁶ The use of Royal Name seals in office contexts after the death of the named monarch is well-attested in the interface between the Fortification and Treasury tablets (see below and Garrison and Root 1996).

¹⁷ Zettler 1979.

the particularities of the Babylonian milieu. Significant as the findings are for certain levels of discussion, they should not be used to generate assumptions about the look of the situation within the dynamic and pluralistically energized setting of imperial cityscapes at Pasargadae under Cyrus (or Persepolis under Darius). Furthermore, we can say now that among certain groups of individuals Babylonian imagery remained prominent even for new seal creations deep into the Achaemenid period and right in the Persian dynastic heartland — alongside the rich blossoming of glyptic art in wholly other directions¹⁸.

The majority of the seals used on the Fortification tablets are Achaemenid period products rather than genuine antiques from the more remote past, even though many display significant archaizing allusions. There is, on one hand, every reason to assume that there were seal workshops functioning in the region of Pasargadae already in the reign of Cyrus II. Such workshops probably produced art as interesting and complexly related to venerable and foreign traditions as was the monumental architecture and sculpture being created at the site¹⁹. Furthermore, such workshops would quite likely have continued in operation after the power change to Darius — even if subtle shifts in social mandate redirected some stylistic and iconographical norms and even if the artists' studios literally decamped to the Marv Dasht plain to follow the flow of clients after the founding of Persepolis. On the other hand, the Fortification tablets have not supplied clear proof of this scenario *in the form of specific seals definitively pinpointing moments in glyptic production demonstrably dating to late Cyrus/Cambyses*.

Despite the above caveat about precisely datable proof, it is worthwhile admitting one additional seal into the discussion here. PFS 284* (Fig. 5). This seal seems to have been used by an individual described as “the Beziyamatiyan,” which should be an Elamite equivalent for Pasargadae²⁰. This seal includes an inscription in Greek which has resisted interpretation; it also includes a very unusual style and iconography within the Fortification corpus of seal impressions. Its seemingly Egypto-Phoenician aspects

¹⁸ Root in press; Bregstein 1993.

¹⁹ See especially Nylander 1970.

²⁰ Note 3 above on Beziyamatiya. Root 1997 for this seal in the context of cultural pluralism attested at Persepolis; Garrison and Root in press, PFS 284* catalogue entry.

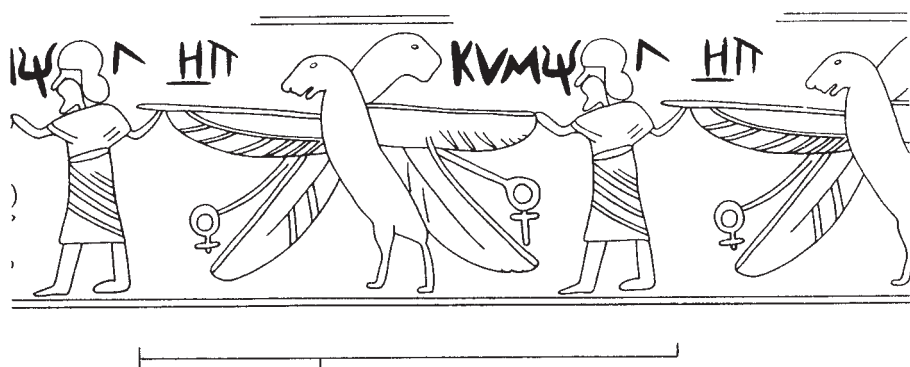


Fig. 5. Composite drawing of PFS 284* apparently belonging to a man from Beziyamatiya (Pasargadae?). (The scale indicates 1 cm.).

tempt us to suggest that it emerged from a workshop in the western periphery of the empire. But it is important to keep in full view the intercultural creative environment of Pasargadae itself, with its Lydian masonry, its Assyro-Babylonian imagery in Palace S, and its Egypto-Elamite imagery in Palace R²¹. Could PFS 284* have been a product of a Pasargadae seal workshop during the heyday of construction activity under Cyrus II (between ca. 546 and 529)? And if so, can the belted garment of the hero with its tentative sleeves and folds be of any relevance to our inquiry into experimentation on an effective and more-or-less standardized formula for the rendering of the belted, voluminously sleeved, and pleated robe worn at the Achaemenid Persian court?

Could the unusual aspects of the iconography of PFS 284* relate in any way to the unusual aspects of the iconography of the Pasargadae seal (which we will discuss a bit later)? Could both of these seals, in other words, possibly reflect particularities of the social environment of Pasargadae in some way? For now, we hazard an interim summation of broad issues we have discussed so far. Despite limitations of evidence, the Persepolis Fortification archive can definitely be said to document a creative environment of experimentation in glyptic art that provides an important *paradigm of probability* for the Pasargadae setting some years earlier. The Fortification archive also provides an important paradigm of probability

²¹ Nylander 1970; Kawami 1972; Stronach 1978.

concerning cultural pluralisms at work and special demands of particular patrons. We need to think about the cylinder seal excavated by Stronach at Pasargadae within that notional setting.

That having been said, it still remains a vexingly open question whether the formal resolutions to the portrayal of the Persian court robe — as we see it, for instance in variant forms, on the Pasargadae seal, on some seal impressions used on tablets dating to the reign of Darius in the Fortification archive, and on the sculptures of Palace P at Pasargadae — may already have been created during the reign of Cyrus II. Some have argued that the reliefs of Pasargadae Palace P (and indeed any representation of the codified Persian court robe with regularized pleats and voluminous sleeves) must post-date the Behistun relief of Darius (521-519 B.C.E.). The reasoning of this assumption is that the Behistun drapery must represent an early phase in an inexorably evolutionary development of a representational modality for the Persian court robe. Such an assumption overlays notions of development traditionally used by historians of Greek art onto the Persian sphere. These notions of unidirectional development are simply not operative in the Achaemenid Persian environment, where self-conscious, carefully targeted referencing of antique or foreign styles and iconographies was a much more compelling factor in the creative process²².

Because it is quite informative on the potentials and limitations of the archival evidence newly marshaled to an old problem, I shall push just a bit further on the evidence we have about precise dating of the experimentation leading to standardization of the portrayal of the court robe that we see on the Pasargadae seal and elsewhere. Consider a seal, known through ancient impressions, inscribed trilingually in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian with the name of Darius (*r.* 521-486 B.C.E.): Persepolis Treasury seal PTS 1*. It is used on eight tablets, six of which preserve dates

²² Root 1979, 49-58, for a critique of this approach. Stronach (1978 and ongoing — e.g., 1997, 252) is among those convinced (*pace* myself) that the Palace P *sculptures*, as well as the inscriptions, had to have been designed and carved in the reign of Darius. His arguments in *Pasargadae* were not available to me when *King and Kingship* went to press; but they would not substantially change my position on the sculptures. I do not wish to enter into a debate here on the issues of when the inscriptions were applied to Palace P. I simply wish to establish the legitimacy of keeping open for continued examination the notion that the standardized representation of the Persian court robe as on Palace P *may* have been formulated already in monumental sculpture or seals before the reign of Darius — irrespective of when Palace P itself was decorated.

(and fall within years 2-4 of the reign of *Xerxes* [r. 486-465 B.C.E.])²³. Here, the hero figure wears a Persian robe which has been tucked up very much as we see it on the Behistun relief of Darius²⁴. Thus, the hero's upraised leg is exposed below the knee and his robe is stretched across at a diagonal which erases the omega fold that we would otherwise expect to see fully articulated at the hemline. The fact that PTS 1*, naming Darius, is known to us only through impressions on tablets dating to the reign of *Xerxes* suggests the likelihood that it is a late Darius seal rather than a seal made at the very beginning of his long reign (i.e., at the same time as the Behistun relief was carved). Being scrupulously conservative on the matter of assumptions, we must admit that this continued usage into the reign of *Xerxes* does not *prove* that PTS 1* was manufactured *late* rather than early in Darius' reign²⁵.

What we can at least say with confidence, however, is this: by the closing years of the sixth century, approximately mid-way through the reign of Darius I, seals inscribed trilingually with his royal name and showing a human figure in Persian court robe with full sleeves and multiple pleats (such as we also see on the reliefs of Pasargadae Palace P and on the Persepolis sculptures) are known to have been in active use at Persepolis (e.g., PFS 7*, Fig. 6)²⁶. Another such Royal Name seal, PFS 11*, replaces in 503 B.C.E. a seal (PFS 83) used earlier by the important administrator, Zisshawish, who henceforth uses PFS 11* exclusively²⁷. This strongly suggests that PFS 11* was commissioned at about that time — although here again, it is possible that it was only in 503 that the seal was *given* to Zisshawish as his seal of office. It may, in theory, have been *carved* much earlier in Darius' reign than the date of its passing to Zisshawish. In any event we can say for certain that for PTS 1* (the Treasury seal with drapery similar to that on the Behistun relief) to represent a preliminary *evolutionary* phase *toward* the unidirectional development of the standardized representation formula for the Persian court robe, it would have to have been carved significantly before 503. For what it is worth, I do not find the

²³ Schmidt 1957, 18 and pl. 3.

²⁴ Root 1979, Pl. VI, and with extensive discussion and bibliography.

²⁵ I am, to be sure, operating here on the assumption that seals inscribed with a specific royal name did not continue to be made after the death of the king in question.

²⁶ Garrison and Root in press, for PFS 7* will full bibliography.

²⁷ Hallock 1977, 128, makes the point of the datable appearance of PFS 11* on the scene. See Garrison and Root forthcoming, Fascicule II, for this seal.

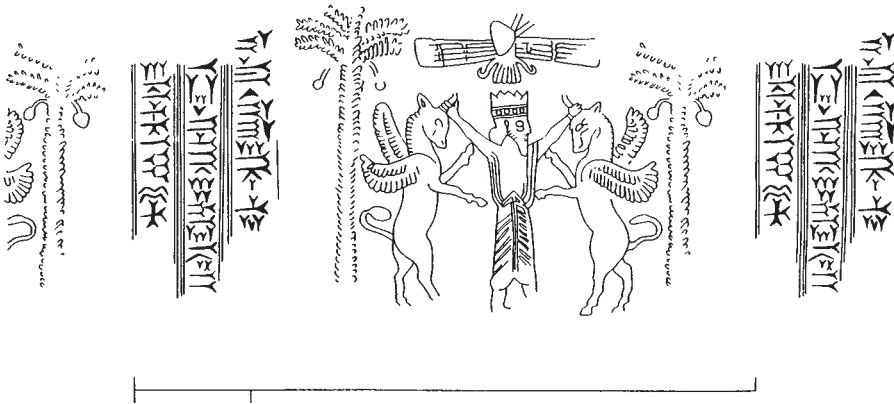


Fig. 6. Composite drawing of PFS 7*, an office seal in the Persepolis administration under Darius the Great. (The scale indicates 1 cm.)

tendencies of the seal evidence lending support to the theory of unidirectional evolution of style in drapery rendition.

Although a basic standard for rendition of the court robe is established by the time we see it on the Royal Name seals used on the Fortification tablets, we have already noted that there is significant room for variability within the basic notion. It is evident that in glyptic art numerous options in rendition of the court robe were being *deployed* by seal engravers in their workshops (as well as used on documents) simultaneously. The robe shown on the Pasargadae seal is in keeping with examples already in use between 509 and 494 B.C.E. on the Fortification corpus. An *especially* close parallel for stylistic idiosyncracies of the robe (with off-centered vertical pleat and rounded, deeply scalloped contours of the hemline, combined with pushed up sleeves) is, however, seen via ancient impressions in the Persepolis *Treasury* archive (PTS 11)²⁸. This seal may have been inscribed; but no inscription is legible on the preserved impressions. It is used on undated Treasury labels and thus is likely to fit in with a usage date of very late Darius through early Artaxerxes, although we cannot establish the date more narrowly than that. The crown of the Pasargadae hero is closely paralleled by another Treasury seal, PTS 16²⁹. Here, we are

²⁸ Schmidt 1957, 23 and Pl. 5.

²⁹ Schmidt 1957, 24-25, Pl. 6.

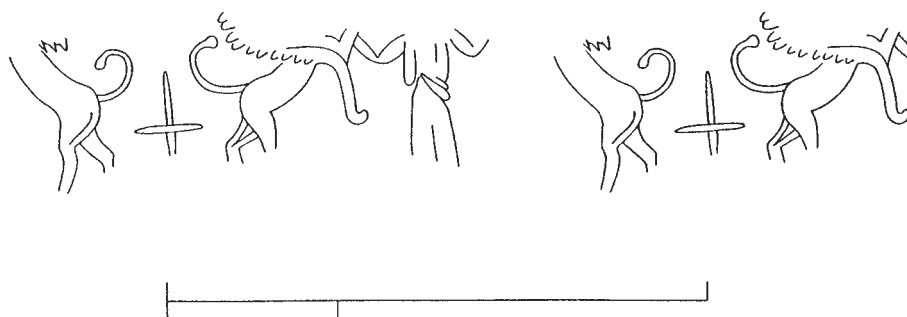


Fig. 7. Drawing of PFS 1057 in Garrison's Mixed Styles II.
(The scale indicates 1 cm.)

dealing with a seal documented in use in year 19 of Xerxes. The crown on PTS 16, like that on the Pasargadae seal, displays three wide-based points. The Persian crowns on seals impressed on the Fortification corpus range in formats; but none displays precisely this three-pointed aspect. Those specifically on the Royal Name seals used in the corpus are meticulously five-pointed³⁰.

The figure style of the Pasargadae seal is consonant with dominant trends seen in the Fortification corpus. The lion, with its fluid contours and soft, upturned paws, conforms neatly to the local style isolated by Mark Garrison and called by him the Fortification Style³¹. This style is represented by a full 50% of the 313 seals displaying heroic encounter in our Fortification research corpus. Added touches of modeling and unmasked drill work are distinctive and introduce a hybrid aspect infusing the seal with something of the Modeled Style tradition asserted with spectacular and unique aggressiveness on PFS 16* (Fig. 4). Similarly, the hero is at home as an example of Fortification Style carving modes, although his crown and robe overlay an iconography characteristically seen in the

³⁰ Root 1979, esp. 92-93, on the problem of crown variation as a chronological index in Achaemenid art. This issue needs to be looked at systematically once the seal corpora from Persepolis, Nippur (Murashu archive), and Daskyleion are all published in full and with illustrations adequate to such micro-analysis.

³¹ Garrison 1991 for an overview of information presented in much more detail in Garrison 1988. See also Garrison and Root in press, Introduction. I thank Mark Garrison for personal communication about the Pasargadae seal's style; but I hasten to add that I alone am responsible for the tentative conclusions I have drawn here.

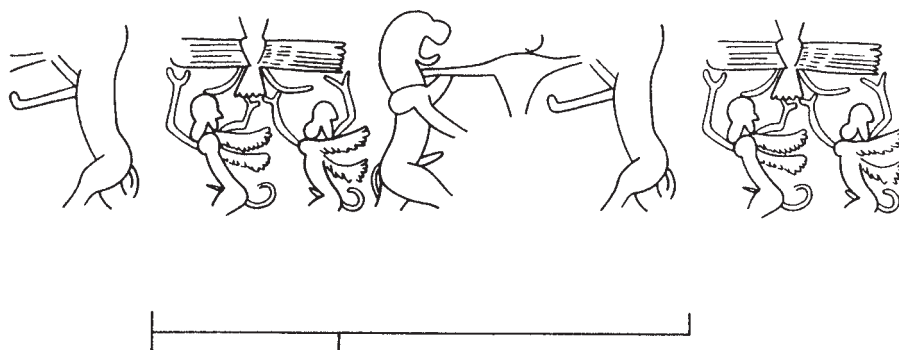


Fig. 8. Drawing of PFS 1071 in Garrison's Mixed Styles II.
(The scale indicates 1 cm.)

Court Style. The style of the wings of the winged figure, with elegant curving contours and much surface detailing, also introduces a hybrid aspect to this seal — blending the feel of Persepolis Court Style wings of creatures (viz., PFS 7*: Fig. 6). Taking all these elements into consideration, the Pasargadae seal seems to conform well in my opinion to Garrison's Mixed Styles II category. This category groups together a number of seals used on the Fortification tablets which blend specific features of the Fortification Style and the Court Style (e.g., PFS 1057: Fig. 7; PFS 1071: Fig. 8)³².

Overall, the Pasargadae seal seems likely to have been produced in a workshop in the Greater Persepolis region under the strong influence of the local Fortification Style which we can now document as so quantitatively prominent on seals deployed on the Persepolis Fortification tablets. It is, moreover, one of those seals which carries on an internal formal dialogue with trends in Court Style production. I reiterate, however, that no chronological distinction is necessarily implied by this hybrid aspect. That is to say, Court Style products, Fortification Style products, and products in other styles such as the Modeled Style were being created simultaneously — at least by the time we observe the situation through the Fortification corpus. The attentive reader of Garrison's dissertation in conjunction with the final published visual documentation of the hero seals in the corpus will be able to appreciate the richness of the material and the

³² Garrison and Root in press, catalogue entries for these seals.

multiplicity of stylistic dialogues reflected across the macro-categories of workshop breakdown and the micro-categories of specific artistic hands that can be traced within them³³. Indeed, if the Pasargadae seal were known to us through ancient impressions on the Fortification tablets its occurrence would seem very mainstream on stylistic grounds. The dimensions of the seal also accord well with standards we see for seals in the Fortification corpus of hero seals³⁴.

The representational structure of the Pasargadae seal — a heroic combat encounter with a significant terminal field device — is also mainstream in the Fortification corpus. The crescent in the upper field is, furthermore, a very common device on hero seals and also figures prominently in the Fortification corpus with other representational imagery. It is common on seals documented on the Murashu tablets from Nippur as well³⁵. In this latter context, its usage pattern primarily on stamp seals displaying Babylonian worship scenes has suggested to Bregstein that the meaning of the symbol remains closely linked to traditional Babylonian religious imagery. In the Persian context the crescent as we see it on some seals (such as the Pasargadae seal and many similar ones used on the Fortification tablets) may also have acquired a new meaning as a symbol of the patron deity of the Achaemenids (Ahuramazda) in lunar form³⁶.

The robe and the dentate crown are, in contrast, *not* quantitatively dominant among seals used on the Fortification tablets³⁷. Far more common is the Assyrian costume with kilt overlaid by long open skirt which leaves the forward leg exposed. Here we must emphasize that quantitative infrequency of the Persian court robe is offset by the apparent importance of the representational modality for Royal Name seals. Much thinking remains to be done on this issue. The seals used on the Treasury tablets seem more consistently to use this iconography of the “canonical” Persian robe; but

³³ See Garrison 1996 for an overview of selected aspects of the approaches employed in analyzing these phenomena.

³⁴ Garrison and Root in press for charts displaying heights and diameters of the cylinder seals in the Fortification tablet corpus of images of heroic encounter that are preserved well enough through impressions to tabulate in this way. The Pasargadae seal, measuring 1.60 cm. in height, is right in line with the average Fortification Style seal dimensions.

³⁵ Bregstein 1993, 100-104.

³⁶ Moorey 1978, 148, interprets it thus on the Pasargadae seal.

³⁷ Garrison and Root in press, where it is abundantly clear that some version of the old Neo-Assyrian robe was far more popular even on seals such as PFS 16* which are indisputably products of the reign of Darius.

the Treasury corpus is very small compared to the Fortification corpus. Furthermore, the restricted nature of the personages represented through the Treasury documents may pre-select iconography and skew the statistics in favor of the popularity of the Persian court robe. With that warning having been offered, I do think it is probable that in the course of the reigns of Darius and Xerxes the representation of the Persian court robe becomes increasingly common on seals used by a variety of types of individuals and offices. This may be an index of dating for the Pasargadae seal. The evidence from the Murashu archive does not provide a clear resolution of this hypothesis. There, as on the Fortification tablets, we see both Assyro-Babylonian costumes and Persian ones. Although the date of the archive is later (so that we might in theory expect more dominance of the Persian court robe), the milieu is Mesopotamian (so that we might expect an especially strong continuity in portrayal of Assyro-Babylonian costumes).

The Pasargadae seal displays other elements of iconography that are much more unusual within the context established by the Persepolis archives. Specifically, the four-winged (rather than two-winged) hovering figure is not found on seals of *any* representational category documented through impressions on the Fortification or Treasury corpus. This seems remarkable indeed. The image is clearly rare; and I am at this point unable to assess the significance of this rarity³⁸. I doubt, somehow, that it reflects a *major* chronological distinction. The look of the Pasargadae seal seems so comfortable within the Parsa environment documented through the Fortification corpus and the slightly later Treasury corpus that I hesitate to suggest at this point that the four-winged device reflects *either* a large chronological gap *or* a production milieu divorced from the Parsa region.

The best parallel I know for the four-winged hovering figure appears on a chalcedony seal now in Freiburg. It has no archaeological context, unfortunately³⁹. Here, the four-winged figure hovers over an encircled bust of a crowned male figure, rather than over a wheel⁴⁰. The encircled bust surely represents a spiritual entity in some sense — whether Ahuramazda in a symbiotic solar/lunar configuration, the “daimon” of the Achaemenid dynasty,

³⁸ Moorey 1978, 147 and n. 78. Kaim 1991 gathers together a small number of examples including the Pasargadae seal itself — which is the only excavated one.

³⁹ Keel and Uehlinger 1990, Taf. IV, for the seal itself; Kaim 1991, Taf. 9.2 for the modern impression.

⁴⁰ Moorey 1978, 146-147, discusses the motif of encircled male bust in Achaemenid art.

or some other notion. A comparison between the Pasargadae seal and the Freiburg seal tempts me to suggest that the encircled bust and the wheel are related in meaning somehow.

The wheel as an isolated emblem divorced from a chariot is not found at all on the Treasury sealings. One is known to me from the Fortification corpus — but it does not have the same compositional position and force as does the Pasargadae wheel. PFS 666s is a stamp seal that depicts a plain wheel in total isolation⁴¹. It is reminiscent of a small number of Neo-Assyrian stamp seals — in particular, one documented through an impression from Nimrud, which looks definitively like a wheel to me, but is described by Parker as an eight-pointed star⁴². Another wheel emblem appears on the remarkable Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal from the Samian Heraion⁴³. Here, the wheel is smaller than that on the Pasargadae seal in relation to the rest of the imagery on the cylinder; but it is the base emblem in a column of four symbols acting as the terminal for a worship scene. Thus its force as an emblem is certainly significant.

The line between a representation that we can categorize definitively as a wheel and that which we should instead categorize as a star or solar symbol can be very fine. Furthermore, a representation of a thing that looks like a functional wheel might in certain circumstances be meant to allude to a solar symbol. The possibility of metaphorical symbiosis is important. It is perhaps significant in this connection that there are at least twenty-two seals represented in the Fortification corpus (Fascicule II) that include depictions of chariots. In every case, the chariot car sits *above* the wheel. Thus, although the wheel is clearly meant to be thought of as part of the chariot, it is rendered separately. In some instances the wheel looks very much like a symbol which, if captured out of context, would surely be

⁴¹ In Garrison and Root 1996, PFS 666s is listed as occurring on PF 429 and PF 1326. Re-examination of the tablets in the course of preparing this article as well as making the final drawing for Fascicule III has convinced us now that the stamp seal on PF 429 is probably a different seal — depicting a star formed of intersecting lines with no encircling rim. It will be renumbered. PFS 666s (which will remain associated with the image on PF 1326) has a distinct rim, although it is not ribbed as the Pasargadae wheel rim is. See Garrison and Root forthcoming, Fascicule III, for both these seals.

⁴² Parker 1955, 124. This interpretation is reiterated by Herboldt (1992, 184 [Nimrud 49] and Taf. 11/9) who does not consider the possibility of a wheel representation for any of the wheel-like symbols in her synthetic discussion of iconographical devices.

⁴³ Excavated by the German team at Samos. Collon 1987, 135-137 (no. 573), for an easily accessible illustration.

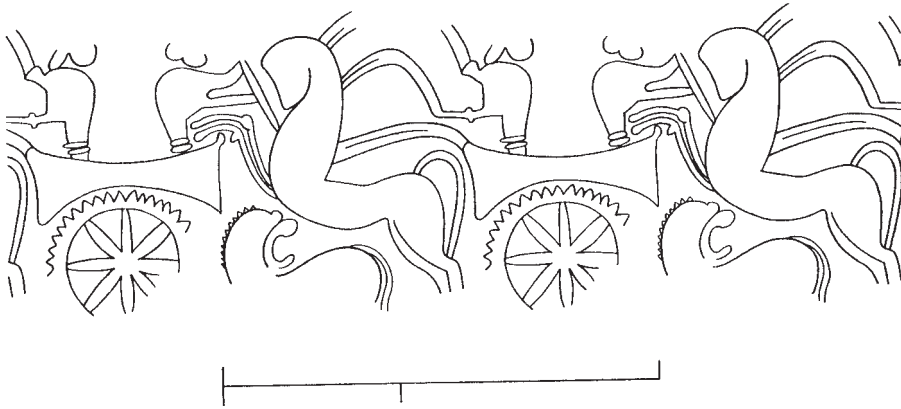


Fig. 9. Composite drawing of PFS 207, a chariot hunt scene in Fascicule II.
(The scale indicates 1 cm.).

categorized as a solar emblem by some interpreters (e.g., PFS 207: Fig. 9⁴⁴). Most of the chariot wheels on seals used on the Fortification tablets show a hub — and thus convey a semblance of functional accuracy about them. But PFS 207 is one of a small number which, like the Pasargadae seal, the Assyrian examples mentioned above, and PFS 666s/ex-PFS 666s (also mentioned above) do *not* depict a hub. In this regard they do indeed seem to suggest a fluid state between wheel and star. In this regard, it is especially interesting to note how carefully detailed the ribbing is on the broad and very serviceable looking *rim* of the wheel depicted on the seal from Pasargadae despite the omission of the functionally indispensable hub. The famous unexcavated Royal Name seal of Darius (presumably Darius I) now in the British Museum shows a chariot with a very real looking wheel (including a hub, eight spokes, and a broad rim with studs for traction⁴⁵). In other words, *this* wheel and the vehicle it supports seem to have no metaphorical pretensions, no suggestion of fluid boundaries with a solar emblem. Contrast the wheels of chariots on the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis. Here, the wheels are also rendered faithfully to a representation of plausible, actual vehicular gear; but the added touch of meticulously detailed linch pins in the form of archaic looking peg figures seems to

⁴⁴ Garrison and Root forthcoming, Fascicule II.

⁴⁵ Garrison 1991, 19-20 and Fig. 32.

inscribe onto these wheels a possible statement of some significance that still escapes us⁴⁶.

The *isolated* wheel symbol in any form is not common in Achaemenid Persian art as we know it to date. Reinforcing its extraordinary rarity from what we know of the Persepolis region so far, I know of no glyptic evidence for it from Susa⁴⁷. Similarly, it does not seem to be documented via seals impressed on the tablets of the Murashu archive or the Ur hoard of sealings⁴⁸. Since this material dates later in the Achaemenid period, we might have hoped that the wheel would turn up in one of these excavated corpora and indicate for us a chronological distinction. By the same token, we might have hoped that the Mesopotamian loci of these two corpora might give us an indication that the variable was a regional one. There is no verification for either of these possible explanations at present. To my knowledge, no wheel symbol is found on the seal impressions from the western satrapal capital of Daskyleion soon to be published in full by Deniz Kaptan.

Does the wheel mean anything special in Achaemenid Persian tradition? I have no doubt that it does. Moorey has already commented on the likelihood that the wheel symbol in Achaemenid art may represent a departure from Mesopotamian tradition and relate more specifically to an Iranian notion of the “wheel of heaven”⁴⁹. To this I would add that Vedic concepts of cyclical time and motion bring us full circle in the querying of metaphorical symbioses between wheels and chariots as real things with practical applications and such items turned to a symbolic plane⁵⁰. In this arena we may eventually find the connection between the “spirit”-bust encircled within the conjoined solar/lunar circle and the real wheel *qua* cosmic wheel. It may also be here that we will find some more plausible explanation for the linch pins on the Apadana chariot wheels; some explanation relating to ancient kings and the holding together of the wheel of cyclical time.

⁴⁶ The very interesting article by Ellis (1966) compares the linch pins on the hubs of the Apadana vehicles to early Mesopotamian foundation figurines. He concludes that these renderings on the Apadana display Persian misunderstanding of the function of such third millennium foundation figurines (which they would have come across incidentally, perhaps in the course of rebuilding operations somewhere). I am inclined to suppose the likelihood of a much more informed, self-conscious aspect to these linch pins.

⁴⁷ Amiet 1972.

⁴⁸ Bregstein 1993; Legrain 1951.

⁴⁹ Moorey 1978, 148.

⁵⁰ In addition to Moorey’s discussion, Eliade 1952, esp. 57-91, is useful.

It is beyond the scope of this article to pursue such issues further; but I hope to do so in another context. I leave the topic here with only one final speculation. It is intriguing that there are striking formal similarities between the set up of the standard chariot car with detached wheel as represented on the Fortification seal impressions (and also frequently elsewhere in early Achaemenid glyptic) and the elongated wings with emergent bust that hovers over the wheel on the Pasargadae seal. Could the *four-winged* aspect of the winged bust on the Pasargadae seal be meant as some *allusion* to the illusion of the bust *in flight* — *perhaps with some spiritually specific message*? The idea would be that here we are seeing the winged figure *in motion, with wings spread*. This would imply that the more common “two-winged” figure is actually a “four-winged” figure whose wings are shown as only two because they are conflated in static hieratic aspect.

In favor of the hypothesis that the Pasargadae seal depicts the figure in flight is the fact that the upper set of wings is clearly rendered smaller than the lower. This gives the impression of a kind of perspective which enhances the sense of motion in space⁵¹. The seal in Freiburg with a four-winged figure over encircled bust exhibits the same wing treatment⁵². There are examples in the Fortification corpus of figures depicted with a foreshortened wing, seeming to infuse the figure with an aggressive flapping aspect (viz., PFS 9*, Fig. 10), the archaizing Fortification Style seal of Parnaka which is subsequently replaced by PFS 16* (Fig. 4). It is by no means improbable from a standpoint of artistic intentionality that this foreshortening could be carefully planned according to goals of narrative content of the given seal. In terms of implied meaning, the idea of intended depiction of motion relates to interpretive suggestions relating to the flight of the “Frahvahr” — as proposed by Shahbazi, who does not, however, distinguish possible nuances of meaning between a two-winged and a four-winged (spread-winged) bust emergent⁵³.

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⁵¹ The close and very rare parallel for the Pasargadae seal cited by Stronach and Moorey (Buchanan 1966, No. 673) seems to depict a four-winged figure rather than a two-winged figure over the wheel as well; but it is not quite clear to me from the published photograph. This seal is without provenance.

⁵² Keel and Uehlinger 1990, Taf. IV.

⁵³ Shahbazi 1980.

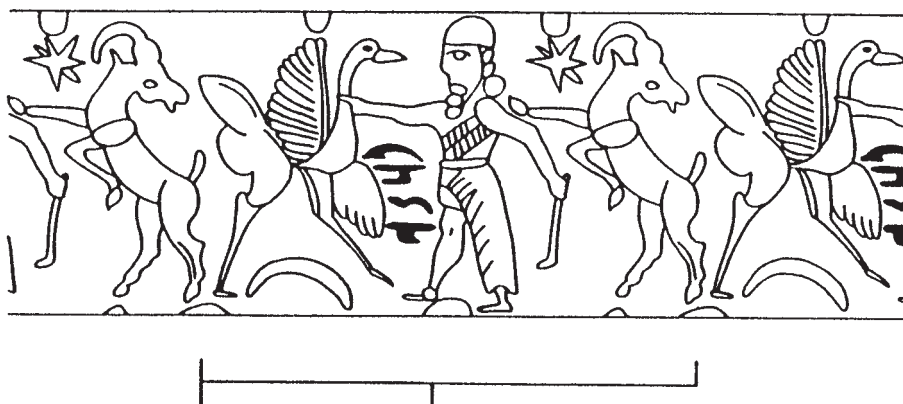


Fig. 10. Composite drawing of PFS 9*, the archaizing Fortification Style of Parnaka, uncle of Darius the Great, used before he acquired PFS 16* in 500 B.C.E. (The scale indicates 1 cm.).

In sum, many formal features of the Pasargadae seal suggest the probability that it was carved sometime in the period of late Darius or during the reign of Xerxes. Formal features also suggest that the seal was a product of the heartland Persian creative environment. One aspect of the situation is impossible to comment on at present: the precise nature and origin of the stone out of which the seal was carved. In any case, this feature has no necessary bearing on its locus of carving, since seal stones were not necessarily indigenous to the regions in which they were carved. We might assume that local Fortification Style seals would tend to be made out of locally available stone; but here again the assumption is not necessarily warranted⁵⁴. It is important to point out in this context that “Fortification Style” does not mean “cheap” or qualitatively inferior. Many high status individuals use Fortification Style seals on the Fortification tablets. Their seals are rather brilliant creations in compositional formatting and personal statement (viz., PFS 9*, owned by the powerful Parnaka, an uncle of Darius.)⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The important study by Michelle Marcus (1996) elucidates many critical aspects of what a “local style” can mean in glyptic production. But as with the Persepolis material, we are dealing here primarily with seal *impressions*. See Marcus 1996, 20. The Hasanlu material does not give us enough data for a statistical discussion of local style glyptic in relation to materials used for specific local style seals.

⁵⁵ Garrison 1991; 8-9; Garrison and Root, in press, Introduction and catalogue entry for PFS 9*.

Such individuals may have commissioned Fortification Style seals carved of special stones.

It is possible, I suppose, that seal studies will evolve to such an elevated state of visual acuity that we can really suggest the type of stone most likely to have yielded a particular ancient impression. In my opinion, however, this is “pie-in-the-sky.” There are too many variables when dealing with ancient impressions. These variables concern numerous aspects of the physical conditions pertaining around any specific seal application taking place in a real social setting in antiquity: Was the tablet too wet or too dry (so that the impression is vexed by distortions either way)? Was the person who applied the seal careless, distracted, or pressed for time — so that the impression is haphazard or faintly rendered? Or was the person applying the seal so meticulous (either by nature or by some pressure of administrative expectations) that his or her sealings tend to dig too deep into the tablet — causing other types of distortions in the malleable clay? Was the seal used by either type of user — on the polarized spectrum of personalities I have suggested — arthritic or robust? And what about the seal itself? Was the seal (regardless of the softness or hardness of its material) worn or fresh? Did it have a mounting mechanism that facilitated good clear reproductions in impression? Or was it being used (as some seals in the Fortification corpus seem to have been) despite the fact that it had been severely damaged or very worn, and apparently devoid of a previous mounting system?

Very few excavated seal artifacts are known from the Achaemenid heartland in comparison to the large number of ancient impressions now known as a result of study of the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury archives⁵⁶. Thus we do not have an adequate basis as yet for working effectively with the interesting question of whether seal style was closely

⁵⁶ There are about 1,434 discrete seals documented at this writing for the Persepolis Fortification tablet research corpus alone. This leaves aside many additional seals which will turn out to be documented through impressions on the remainder of the total Fortification archive of some 30,000 items. It also leaves aside the smaller Treasury corpus. Compare this with the only fifty-four seal *artifacts* retrieved at the site during the same Chicago excavations. Many of the retrieved seal artifacts clearly post-date the period of the Fortification archive and also include signet rings which are not represented in the Fortification archive at all. If these items are excluded, the disparity between available seal impressions and seal artifacts that could conceivably have been used to make impressions at a given point in time becomes even more significant.

related to seal fabric in this period and geographical setting. It is furthermore well known that materials analysis is desperately needed on a systematic scale for seals of all periods. The types of questions scholars are now posing about artifacts demand such studies. Yet, perversely, global politics have been intervening in the pursuit of fine-tuned analyses of artifacts excavated now long ago. The mention of global politics brings us neatly to the issue of the possible fate of the Pasargadae seal at the hands of history.

Artifactual History

From the entire ancient Near East only a few examples are known so far of a retrieved seal artifact that matches with a retrieved ancient seal impression. Thus, although it would be exciting to discover an impression of the Pasargadae seal among the Fortification or Treasury tablet sealings, it is hardly surprising that no match has been made. Quite the contrary, it would be utterly remarkable if a match *were* made! In his discussion of the Pasargadae seal in the site's excavation publication, David Stronach raised an interesting question about the artifactual history of the seal. The lack of perforation of the cylinder suggested to Stronach the probability that the seal was never used. The missing or unfinished tendril on the winged figure, combined with the rendering of the extended left arm of the hero (which Stronach interpreted as unfinished) further suggested to him that the cylinder seal was never actually completed and used. He postulated that the artist carving the seal gave up the job when it became clear that he had made an error in placing the inverted lion too far from the hero, thus forcing the hero's right arm to be too long.

If we had discovered an impression of the Pasargadae seal on the Fortification tablets the issue could have been resolved definitively once and for all. Alas, as I have explained, however, such an easy solution was not to be expected.

The lack of perforation on the Pasargadae seal is intriguing. But in itself this feature does not necessarily indicate that a cylinder seal was never used. Some cylinder seals, for instance, had caps with mountings that did not involve the need for a perforation through the cylinder. It is possible in the case of the Pasargadae seal that the grooves at the top and bottom edges of the artifact (which read as "line borders" in our drawing of the modern

impression) were actually slotting mechanisms which, combined with an adhesive such as bitumen, kept now-lost cap mountings in place at either end of the cylinder⁵⁷.

There are problems associated with any attempt to push this line of discussion any further. I offer only two here:

1. For the thousands of Near Eastern seals known only through ancient *impressions* we have no way of knowing if they were perforated. (We can sometimes determine if the seals had mounting caps — but mounting caps are not necessarily coterminus with perforations). Furthermore, the nature of the evidence of ancient impressions — specifically on most of the Fortification tablets (deployed on extremely restricted surfaces that mute evidence at the upper and lower edges of impressions) — means that it is often impossible to discern the upper and lower edges of the impression. Thus it is often impossible to determine anything about the type of mounting caps that may have been fitted onto the cylinder seals. Ironically, of course, these seals are precisely the seals that were demonstrably *used* in the Achaemenid period.
2. Scholarly conventions have not in the past uniformly demanded inclusion of a statement describing perforation or lack thereof in seal catalogue information. Systematic compilation of such information, combined then with information on the condition of the specific seals, would give some broad basis for contemplating the relationship between perforation and other factors during specific periods of glyptic production. In general it would seem that seal stones were perforated before being carved if they were going to be perforated at all⁵⁸. But this issue deserves to be *systematically* analyzed⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Collon 1987, 108-112, on cylinder seal mounts.

⁵⁸ Wartke 1997, 51-61.

⁵⁹ Several blank cylinders were found in the Persepolis Treasury debris. All but one was perforated. Schmidt (1957, 57, 64) interprets all these blank cylinders as objects that originally must have been sheathed in gold, with votive inscriptions on the gold. In this way they would take their place as additional items originally derived from the spoils of Mesopotamian temples. They could, however, as easily be unworked cylinders which had (with the one exception) already been perforated in preparation for eventual carving which had not yet taken place. Their retrieval in the Persepolis Treasury would not preclude that possibility (Indeed, they may well have been retrieved from a Mesopotamian temple treasury and still represent part of a cache of as yet unworked cylinders that merely demonstrate the tendency for cylinders to be perforated before being carved.). Temples as well as



Fig. 11. Drawing of PFS 373, a partially preserved hero seal showing artist's error.
(The scale indicates 1 cm.)

Is it likely that the Pasargadae seal was abandoned by the artist as a failed job and thus never used? I cannot of course answer this question definitively; but again the Fortification tablets provide an interesting perspective on the question Stronach raises.

1. The fact that the Pasargadae seal appears to be in such excellent condition is not evidence that it was never used (nor does Stronach suggest this, by the way). On the Fortification tablets we see a great range of conditions — from seals that must have been in pristine condition from top to bottom, to seals that are used repeatedly even though they have chips (viz., PFS 9*: Fig. 10), to seals used repeatedly with radical damage (viz., PFS 15, which looks from the impressions as if its seal caps must have been hacked off, so traumatized are both ends of the cylinder)⁶⁰.
2. There are numerous examples in the Fortification corpus of seals in use which display minor incomplete aspects analogous to the missing tendrils on the winged figure of the Pasargadae seal. There are numerous

palatial compounds had workshops; and seal stones were significant commodities. Note that in this group of perforated but uncarved cylinders from Persepolis, the predominant materials are lapis lazuli and "Egyptian blue."

⁶⁰ Garrison and Root forthcoming, Fascicule III. Note that the Freiburg seal with the close parallel for the four-winged figure shows what such damage looks like from the viewpoint of the seal artifact: Keel and Uehlinger 1990, Taf. IV.



Fig. 12. Drawing of PFS 1367s, showing significant difference in rendering of two arms of the hero. (The scale indicates 1 cm.)

other seals used on the Fortification tablets that display artistic errors (viz., PFS 373: Fig. 11)⁶¹. Here, on this seal preserved only partially, it is nevertheless clear that the artist originally carved the hero's torso frontally and in a manner so that his left arm would extend upward above the shoulder line. Then the concept was changed to suggest a profile torso. The artist rendered two arms lower down extending across the torso; but the line of the original frontal version was not totally erased.

3. There are numerous examples in the Fortification corpus of major differences between the rendition of one anatomical element and another — as we seem to see on the Pasargadae seal with the two rather different arms of the hero. PFS 1367s (Fig. 12), for instance, shows the hero's left arm as a spindly appendage, while his right arm is robust with a well-articulated hand⁶².
4. It is evident from a survey of the Fortification seal impressions that the presentation of the Pasargadae hero at some distance from the lion he grasps is not outside the acceptable norms for such compositions.

⁶¹ Garrison and Root in press, catalogue entry for PFS 373.

⁶² Garrison and Root in press, catalogue entry for PFS 1367s.

5. Possible indications of recutting of the Pasargadae seal have been indicated on our drawing (Fig. 1). Once again, use of recut seals is clearly documented on the Fortification tablets. This suggests that the scarring we see on the Pasargadae seal would not necessarily cause an artist to abandon a basically well-carved item. It further suggests that such scarring would not necessarily keep an owner from using the seal “in public.” Seals in the ancient Near East were frequently recut for reuse, e.g., by new owners⁶³. This brings up yet another point about the Pasargadae seal. It would be very interesting to be able to examine the actual artifact with the issue of recutting in mind. The scarring we indicate in our drawing suggests the ghost of an animal (lion?) form that might have been posed *marchant* to the left, with one forearm placed along the rim of the wheel.
6. The seal from Pasargadae is a good quality example of Achaemenid glyptic production. We have already observed, furthermore, that its iconography is very distinctive. The symbolism of the wheel and four-winged figure may relate specifically to particular Vedic spiritual concepts that seem to have been represented in this way only rarely. This urges us to consider that the seal was a commissioned piece designed for an individual of particular beliefs and spiritual inclinations and/or ethnic identity or affiliation. If this is the case, it seems (given the additional evidence listed above) even less likely that the seal was intentionally abandoned by either the artist or the patron.
7. It may not be pure coincidence that our PFS 284* (Fig. 5), known through impressions in the Persepolis archive to have been used by a man from Beziyamatiya (Pasargadae?), is as unusual in its iconography as is the actual seal excavated at Pasargadae. Both seals have special overtones suggesting particular cult affiliations. Is it possible that we are seeing here an artifactual record of a diverse population of “religious people” located at Pasargadae in the post-Cyrus period as the site moved from its original function of major dynastic headquarters to a treasury *cum* sanctuary?
8. If the Pasargadae seal was indeed abandoned as a bad job and never used, this raises the likelihood (but cannot *prove*) that there was a seal workshop right in the Pasargadae area in the period of late Darius or

⁶³ Collon 1987, 120-122, on recutting and reuse of old seals.

Xerxes. In this case, we would imagine that the seal was still commissioned by a special sort of personage at Pasargadae (as indicated in item 7 above). Rejected by the patron before even being completed, it might have become part of a seal carver's inventory of scrap seals destined for possible recarving at a later date. The Pasargadae seal is, however, quite small already to be a great candidate for further reduction; and the fact that the stone itself is not of great intrinsic value might make it somewhat less likely to have been saved for further cutting down to a really miniscule proportion. More plausible I should think would be the artist's attempt to sell it to someone else if the original patron declined the work. It might also have been kept on hand by a seal carver as a reminder of an interesting motif once requested by a very particular patron.

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Whoever its intended owner and whatever its artifactual fate before David Stronach recovered it on the Takht, the cylinder seal from Pasargadae remains a most important artifact deserving of continued contemplation.

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